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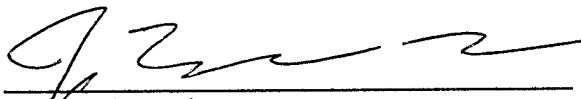Designed using Perform Pro, WHS/DIOR, Oct 94

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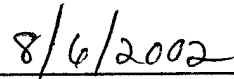
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THE STAGE OF IMAGINATION:

VISUAL DEVICES IN THE "CIRCE" EPISODE OF JAMES JOYCE'S *ULYSSES*

A Master's Paper in

English

by

Elizabeth Barclay Benn

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

James Joyce's experimentation with the narrative form in his 1920 novel *Ulysses*

culminates in the ingenious design of the "Circe" episode. Critics describe the chapter as

Joyce's attempt to represent the human subconscious through narrative, after having

found traditional forms of narrative inadequate for accurate depictions of time and

undercurrents of thought and memory. Employing Deleuze's discussion of the captured

time image as a moment of possibility and consideration, I argue that the new realm of

the subconscious is designed and expressed in a theatric style that the reader encounters

in script form and is forced to consider and rebuild in imagination from Joyce's

synesthetic blueprints. Building from previous research on musical and operatic allusions

in *Ulysses*, I explore the simultaneous allusions to contemporary stage conventions in the

post-Christmas pantomimes and Wagner's music dramas, including particular references

to Wagner's stage directions and the actual machines required for their execution.

Ultimately, the voice represented in the stage directions conflates the collective, emotive

experience of an audience and the singular, intellectual experience of a reader, perhaps

indicating frustration with the print medium and gesturing towards the technologic

possibilities of photography and cinema. This paper investigates the implications of and

influences extant in the script form and its produced drama, as well as the ultimate

emphasis on a sensual, particularly visual, experience made powerful by the suggestion

of its potentiality and simultaneous impossibility.

The Stage of Imagination: Visual Devices in the "Circe" episode of James Joyce's *Ulysses*

James Joyce's *Ulysses* is one of the greatest examples of experimentation with narrative form in the English language and of the twentieth century. But it simultaneously remains an elusive text that escapes concise interpretation and explanation at every turn. A particular example of such wily design is the "Circe" episode. Superficially, the chapter follows Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus into and out of Nighttown, but this description hardly accounts for the bizarre manipulations of scene and time the characters encounter. Critics describe the chapter as Joyce's attempt to represent the human subconscious through narrative, after having found traditional forms of narrative inadequate for accurate depictions of time and undercurrents of thought and memory. Joyce exhausts such conventional forms in the novel's previous fourteen chapters, particularly demonstrated in the parodic stylized paragraphs of the "Oxen of the Sun" episode immediately preceding "Circe" and the flexible intersections and cyclic fluidity of time in "Wandering Rocks." However, without a written model for an exploration of the human mind, Joyce departs from the constraints of his medium and lights out for new territory. This new realm is designed and expressed in a theatric style that the reader encounters in script form and is forced to rebuild in imagination from Joyce's synesthetic blueprints. In this respect, the form enables the disorientation of a reader from the familiar and mechanically fluid visual process of reading traditional narrative and reorients her in a sensual experience rendered from the acknowledgment of

the stage of the imagination. This paper will investigate the implications of and influences extant in this script form and its produced drama as well as the ultimate emphasis on a sensual, and particularly visual, experience made powerful by the suggestion of its potentiality and simultaneous impossibility.

The script form implies a certain utility, even when used as an episode in a novel and surrounded by apparently conventional chapters. Its tradition is that of the scaffold, both the structure around which a visual spectacle is physically designed and the ideological foundation on which it is performed. The artist's responsibility is to present the various elements, but abandon their synthesis to the imagination of and potential depiction by the director, actor, scenic designer or audience member, an idea that I will return to shortly. The script form also recalls the same ancient origins in myth as does the narrative through epic poetry. Greek drama interrogated fate, the morality plays of medieval England rendered visible the internal battles of man's mind and soul, and the Renaissance theatre demonstrated the occurrence of such battles in the lives of specific individuals.

The dramatic script, however, presents the story to its reader, rather than an audience, in discrete increments of character names in boldface type, indented lines and parenthetical, italicized stage directions and asides. For a reader, this printed form disables the realistic temporal flow recreated on stage. What remains is the space for possibility and consideration, an idea Gilles Deleuze addresses in terms of cinematic "movement" and "time" images[1]. Best understood as synonymous with moving film images on television or in film, the movement image can warp the perceived natural flow

of time. By embellishing or editing events, time is experienced as having slowed down or sped up. Loosely applied to the imagined dramatic scenes in "Circe," it is possible to understand events as having occurred in real-time, since their presentation occupies space in the chapter, only to realize that hundreds of lines have occurred in less than a second. For example, one reading of Zoe's lines at 15.1352 and 15.1958[2] is that they are a continuation of the same conversation, and the intermittent scenes occur only in Bloom's mind.

A more useful application of Deleuze, though, is his isolation of the time image. Familiarity with the reading process has imposed a structure of cause and effect on the reception of words on a page. Left to right, top to bottom, the movement becomes natural and its temporal affect is taken for granted. Deleuze describes this time image as freezing a moment and rendering it independent of "natural" cause and effect mechanisms. In regard to an image, this pause becomes a space of possibility because the event can now resist being swept to its conclusion. The reading of a script produces much the same moment of possibility, reminding the reader to pause between lines and consider the situation. The distraction of character names and stage directions breaks the flow of the reading process and, through it, time. Joyce exploits the visual experience with this form in order to remind his readers of his continued experimentation with alternative methods of depicting thought in actuality. The truncated narration in other episodes demonstrates the limitations time, as effected through traditional prose, imposes on thought. In "Circe," time is dismantled to allow for the expression of all thought.

Just as time is broken down through engagement with a script, so is realistic experience. To return to the utilitarian purpose I mentioned briefly above, the script is a practical blueprint that establishes specifications for particular elements in the dissected experience of a scene. In most cases, the script presupposes the eventual dramatic reproduction of the artistic vision translated into its text. And, as ever, many things are lost in the translation. The artist must categorize and parcel out the elements of a three-dimensional situation in terms of characters' lines, basic descriptions of movements, changes in location and atmospheric particulars, often at the expense of intertwined complexities, such as mood or emotion. The artist must render his four-dimensional vision, the progressive scene of realistic individuals in a place, in two dimensions. In practical application, directors and actors attempt to recreate this sensual third dimension, but inevitably contribute their own interpretations of "subtext."

But this explanation assumes that the artist has no ulterior motives in producing his script and faithfully attempts to preserve his vision in the stage directions and costume descriptions to enable its future reproduction. Judging by the text of the "stage directions" in "Circe," I cannot begin to attribute their voice to Joyce nor would I suggest that they reveal his intentions. Such speculation is hardly fruitful, and the violent inconsistencies among the italicized passages rarely buttress one explanation for long. But they occupy as much text as characters' lines in the episode, and can therefore not be ignored. Summarily, though certainly not exhaustively, their voice describes settings, highlights Bloom's frequent costume changes, reports characters' actions, reports characters' speeches, and at times seems to simply be amusing itself. An example of this

last attribute is the description of Bloom's first entrance, *"On the farther side under the railway bridge Bloom appears...a concave mirror at the side presents to him lovelorn longlost lugugru Booloohoom. Grave Gladstone sees him level, Bloom for Bloom. He passes, struck by the stare of truculent Wellington, but in the convex mirror grin unstuck the bonham eyes and fatchuck cheekchops of jollypoldy the rixdix doldy"* (15.141-149). While possibly commenting on Bloom's appearance and the character's consideration of himself in the mirror as compared to another's assessment of him, the voice observes the entire scene and comments knowingly. This "stage-direction" is unconventional in that it expresses an omnipotent opinion that would be difficult for an actor to portray, but also because it gets distracted by its own word play and rhyming rhythm. The voice demands the attention of the reader's senses by describing a scene to be imagined and by playing with the aural consequence of the word play. Nor is it unimportant that the scene emphasizes Gladstone's ability to see clearly and Bloom's fascination with a distorted sight. It is also a pronounced glimpse at Bloom's voyeuristic nature, and a declaration that, in seeing Bloom see, the reader sees all. It calls attention to the reader's position as a simultaneous observant audience member.

This sensory engagement is rarely addressed by scholars outside of the cataloguing and discussion of Joyce's use of musical allusions. Volumes itemize referenced songs, and the most known among them is Matthew J. C. Hodgart and Ruth Bauerle's research on the allusions in *Finnegans Wake*[3]. While such examination is no doubt time consuming, Bauerle's research is founded on the erroneous definition of a musical allusion as, first, "the direct quotation [of a song] in the same words as the

original"[4], and next, the aural mimicry of a song's sounds or rhythm as expressed through words with similar sounds or in similar metric constructions[5]. This is not to say that Bauerle's definition is wrong, but rather that it is naïve to say that a musical experience is completely rendered through mere textual reproduction. Perhaps with some popular songs, where musical accompaniment is not necessary and the text is presented in a format similar to poetry, one could glean the basic tune. The element missing from this discussion, however, is memory. Encountering a phrase from a familiar song can conjure the memory of experience with the piece, an experience that could have included a musical context.

Zack Bowen and Henriette Lazaridis Power engage the discussion of musical memory in relation to a specific, contemporary experience: the post-Christmas pantomime, a unique model of the musical comedy[6]. Bowen pursues this model as a way of explaining the "Circe" episode, since comedy employs "farce, hyperbole and confusion"[7] and the comedic plot subjects a protagonist to trials in order to prove his "valor, compassion and magnanimity"[8]. Specifically citing Bloom's encounter with Bella/Bello, Bowen approaches an acknowledgment of Joyce's visual emphasis. He suggests that the scene's gender flexibility recreates the pantomime's use of girls to play boy characters, and Bloom's being ridden like a donkey an allusion to wicker donkeys ridden on stage during the pantomime performances. Bowen's ultimate accounting for the comparison is the presence of so-called "musical themes"[9] and the ability of "musical celebrations of comic saturnalia and rebirth" to "delve deep into [the] human psyche"[10].

It is unfortunate that the strict adherence to musical predominance overshadows a possibly insightful connection. Bowen's analysis relies on the textuality of a mostly gestured and scenic experience, an experience Power recreates through the invisibility song from *Turko the Terrible*, "I am the boy/That can enjoy/Invisibility" (1.258-62). The point here is not the music, but the lack of power the words have to do what they say, to turn their speaker invisible. Turko, the character, becomes invisible to his stage cohorts, but Edward Royce, the actor, remains visible to the audience. The third layer of this problem, however, is that the character/actor, as conjured through the text and therefore regardless of fictitious stage presence, is really invisible to the reader. In Power's words:

> Of course, the real invisibility of a creature of narrative, and the inaudibility of a written and unperformed song are necessities of written discourse. But in the case of Turco's complicated invisibility and inaudibility, and in the case of his ghostly presence in *Ulysses*, Joyce not only heightens our awareness of the limits of narrative, but also suggests ways in which song in general and pantomime song in particular can serve as a form of discourse that eludes or challenges the limits of the written text.[11]

While located in the specific instance of pantomime, Power informs my purpose by interrogating the inability for the textual to adequately present the visual, and it is with this information that I wish to reexamine the Bella/Bello passage Bowen dismissed so quickly.

Much like the "stage direction" cited earlier, the Bella/Bello Cohen scene examines Bloom's identity by juxtaposing perceptions of him. The scene begins when *"Bella Cohen, a massive whoremistress, enters"* (15.2742) the room containing Bloom, Stephen, Lynch, Zoe, Kitty and Florry. Arguably more than a simple recreation of boy's playing girl's roles in pantomimes, Bella and Bloom transform into the masculine and feminine versions of themselves, respectively. The only clues to these changes, however, appear in the "stage directions" amid confusing and unspecific pronouns. The first transformation occurs as Bloom finishes tying Bella's shoe lace, *"He knots the lace. Bella places her foot on the floor. Bloom raises his head. Her heavy face, her eyes strike him in midbrow. His eyes grow dull, darker and pouched, his nose thickens"* (15.2829-31). It is unclear whether the pronouns remain connected to their original referents after the phrase in which Bloom raises his head, but, based on the shift to the masculine form of Bella's name, Bello, two lines later, I read this direction as indicating Bloom watching Bella's gender transformation. It is not until the direction in Bello's slightly later line that a change in Bloom, perhaps simultaneous, has also occurred. Bella originally held a fan, so to say, *"he taps her on the shoulder with his fan"* (15.2847), is that the male Bello taps the female Bloom on the shoulder. The next direction confirms this second shift, *"With a piercing epileptic cry she sinks on all fours, grunting, shuffling, rooting at his feet"* (15.2852-53). With the exception of an extended description of Bello Cohen, these are the last truly illustrative directions provided in the scene, but the characters' lines convey the ensuing sado-masochistic violation.

Bello's line elucidates the question of Bloom's identity, "What you longed for has come to pass. Henceforth you are unmanned and mine in earnest, a thing under the yoke. Now for your punishment frock. You will shed your male garments, you understand, Ruby Cohen? and don the shot silk luxuriously rustling over head and shoulders" (15.2964-68). The gender shift renders a facet of Bloom's internal identity visible, turning a longing into a physical attribute. However, the reader does not actually observe the bodily transformation, but renders it in imagination from the combined affect of the directions and the change in character names. Bella becomes Bello through the adjustment of one letter, and Bloom becomes Ruby, a feminine iteration of his son's name, also affected through the alteration of one letter. Just as Turco accentuates his visibility by declaring his invisibility, Bloom's masculine roles as a failed father and a hen-pecked, cuckolded husband become apparently pronounced by his performance of a female character. And, to extend it back to Power's analysis of textual experience, the whole scene remains frustratingly invisible since layers of textual translation, imagination and fantasy obscure any idea of the actual scene. Nonetheless, the emphasis is physical and the ultimate effect, visual.

Power's description of the pantomime's production details also appears salient:

> The British pantomime of the nineteenth century was a more or less
> formulaic production, consisting of two parts: first the "opening," an often
> modernized staging of a fairy tale or folk tale; then the harlequinade, an
> unrelated piece that borrowed its characters and its emphatically gestural
> acting style from the conventions of the commedia dell'arte. Between the

two parts was the transformation scene—a gradual unfolding of layers of elaborate scenery and the best that Victorian special effects had to offer, transporting the characters of the opening scene into a magnificent fairy land.[12]

Yet to follow such a description of elaborate scenery with the statement that "pantomime…relied heavily on music for the creation of its spectacular effects"[13], seems to trivialize the described visual spectacle of performance. So, while the acknowledgement of the visual apparatus in the pantomime can illuminate some of the elements at work in "Circe," extensive comparison proves to explain little of the episode's substance and calls into question any correlation between Joyce's device and the model of the pantomime.

A similar assessment of contemporary stage conventions may enable a more fruitful examination of "Circe," when such critique is oriented in relation to the operatic and critical works of Richard Wagner. The connection between the two artists is not a new idea, and there are extensive studies of the composer's influence on Joyce and catalogues of Wagnerian allusions in Joyce's novels, similar to those mentioned above. Again, the allusions are primarily specific musical references. But, with Wagner, an understanding of those references informs Joyce's structural device.

One example of this is the Wagnerian leitmotif. A concise explanation of the operatic leitmotif is the:

Short musical idea associated with a person, an object, or a thought in the drama. When [Wagner's] text refers to Siegfried, for example, his

leitmotif is usually heard in the orchestra. Leitmotifs are sometimes also heard in the vocal parts. They are varied and transformed to convey the evolving dramatic situation and changes of character.[14]

Literary leitmotifs are slightly different in that they consist of recurring phrases employed during the literary attempt to replicate music through language[15]. Joyce and his contemporaries, George Moore, D'Annunzio, Zola, and Thomas Mann, among others, experimented with incorporating the leitmotif. Joyce critics have extended the term liberally to include:

> Recurring literary and musical allusions (to *Hamlet*, *Don Giovanni*, the *Odyssey*); reappearing characters (Paddy Dignam, the blind piano tuner, the man in the mackintosh); phrases that become attached to particular characters ("bronze by gold" to the barmaids, "jingle" to Boylan); and major themes (parallax, the search for the father, metempsychosis).[16]

So Martin's more restrictive, and arguably more legitimately Wagnerian, definition of literary leitmotif is:

> A brief, distinctive phrase which, through repetition and variation in appropriate contexts, establishes its meaning, acquires intrinsic importance (that is, importance residing not simply in what it signifies or represents), accumulates in thematic and emotional significance, and draws together the contexts in which it appears.[17]

According to this definition, Martin suggests that the phrases "Agenbite of inwit" and "met him pike hoses" would be Joyce's leitmotifs because of each phrase's repetition and connection with the same particular character's emotion in each instance.

An accurate application of the leitmotif and its structural function would be in the "Sirens" episode, with its initial list of phrases and their repetitions throughout the chapter. Wagnerian piano-vocal scores begin with a list of the leitmotifs to be found in the succeeding opera. Such a model clarifies the episode more effectively than that of the fuga per canonem, as directed by Joyce's often misleading Plan. Stuart Gilbert presents this analysis in his reader's guide to *Ulysses*, which he produced in collaboration with Joyce. He claims that the leitmotif helped Joyce thicken the texture of the narrative, and Martin extends this to consider the leitmotif's function in the disruption of "logical" narration and its contribution to Joyce's stream of consciousness.

But if "Sirens" honors Wagner's leitmotif, then "Circe" parodies it. To return to my description of the script form, it traditionally displays characters' names and their spoken lines in normal print, and unspoken directions or sound effects in parentheses or italics. In "Circe," many objects have presences and "voices," since they are included in the same way as the conventional characters, with names and lines. For example, The Bells say, "Haltyaltyaltyall" (15.181), The Gong says, "Bang Bang Bla Bak Blud Bugg Bloo" (15.189), and The Gasjet exclaims, "Pooah! Pfuiiiiiii!" (15.2280). Neglecting the anthropomorphic quality for a moment, these "voices" are at least representative of realistic sounds these objects could make. In other instances, however, the objects are given intelligible lines. The [cake of new clean lemon] Soap sings, "We're a capital

couple are Bloom and I./He brightens the earth. I polish the sky" (15.338-9), and The

Flybill says, "K. 11. Post No Bills. Strictly confidential. Dr. Hy Franks" (15. 2633).

While the latter of these examples refers to the advertisement Bloom encounters in the

lavatory earlier in the day, both objects are given the ability to speak on equal footing

with the episode's other characters, and the Flybill, the profound ability to read aloud

what is written on it as well as what it sees. A similar example, though conversely of

silence, is The Deadhand that, "(*writes on the wall*) Bloom is a cod" (15. 1871). Other

things, perhaps categorized as events or possibilities, have their say as well. The Sins of

the Past, in a medley of voices, list Bloom's possible indiscretions (15.3028-40), and The

End of the World asks, "(*with a Scotch accent*) Wha'll dance the keel row, the keel row,

the keel row?" (15.2181-2). I do not cite these objects' expressions as examples of

Wagnerian leitmotif, though some are repetitions of phrases from other chapters, and nor

am I willing to dismiss their bizarre nature as an effect of the "hallucination" technique

stated in the deceptive Plan. Instead, I see Joyce drawing attention to the negative

consequences of the leitmotif by pronouncing its ability to distract an audience from the

work's larger goal. Extending the "voice" description to the leitmotif expression, it is no

less strange to give a sword a leitmotif, as in *Siegfried*, than it is to give a cake of soap.

Though, to use the leitmotif to comment on itself is to simultaneously praise the audience

member or reader who can follow the major strain through the many opportunities for

distraction.

If Joyce is critical of the Wagnerian leitmotif, the smallest unit of the composer's

works, it does not take a great leap to suggest the author's critique of the composer's

entire method. Wagner's method, however, invested opera with the potential to become a total dramatic and artistic experience. Wagner developed this idea in reaction to the contemporary reception of drama and opera, wherein the audience desired the distraction of elaborate sets and the isolated performance of the virtuoso. In a statement that seems to criticize the pantomime stage as described above, as well as Wagner's motivation, Geoffrey Skelton summarizes:

> The desire eventually arose for a scenic background to satisfy the visual senses, and the consequence in both cases was a serious diminution of the dramatic content: the elaborate machinery installed in the palace theatres to provide a background spectacle diverted attention from the ear to the eye; while the impossibility of providing an authentic background for each of the many scenes in a Shakespearean play was made an excuse for cuts and adaptations that took away much of their poetic and dramatic effect.[18]

Wagner's book, *Opera and Drama*, articulated his answer to the decrepit state of contemporary drama in his vision of "a dramatic art that would fully engage all the senses, and through them the emotions"[19].

A young James Joyce participated in the tradition of "literary Wagnerism," or a familiarity with the philosophical writings of the composer that preceded any exposure to actual performances of his "music dramas." And these philosophical writings spoke to the developing artist's lofty ideals. In the spirit of *Opera and Drama*, Joyce presented the "manifesto" "Drama and Life" before University College's Literary and Historical Society in 1900, praising Wagner's attempts to elevate Drama by aspiring to its totality

and its depiction of myth[20]. Martin also suggests that it is, "not surprising that fiction writers, especially those who are concentrated on the interior lives of their characters, would turn to Wagner, for his works explore the realm of psychology to a far greater extent than anything previously attempted in opera"[21], to which Joyce seems to respond by saying that, "the aim of modernists was 'to enlarge our vocabulary of the subconscious" since classical style "has not the orchestra"[22].

It was the debate of mythic method and the impossibility of pure, ideal dramatic production that ultimately shattered Joyce's admiration of the composer. Wagner looked to the mythic past with a nostalgia that rendered the present in need of redemption[23], and the Irish nationalists simultaneously developed a similar ideology that Joyce disagreed with. "Yeats believed that a drama based on Irish myth could focus Irish political aspirations and develop national consciousness much as Wagner's mythic drama and Bayreuth, in the context of German unification, had apparently done for Germany"[24]. Joyce, however, came to understand myth in terms of themes that are represented iteratively in mundane life. Wagner expected his audience to identify with Siegfried; Joyce made certain his reader understood that Bloom was not Ulysses reincarnated, nor was the reader to emulate Bloom.

Similarly, while Wagner intended to stop the sacrificing of drama to visual spectacle, he ultimately increased the entire spectacle. "Wagner's exacting stage directions, especially for the *Ring*, drew many technical innovations from Bayreuth's engineers—steam curtains, sideways-moving scenery, and improved stage lighting"[25], and it is this attribute of Wagner's operas that Joyce also parodies in "Circe," the extreme

detail of the "stage directions." Joyce's parody of Wagner's elaborate visual effects

hazards the proof for Martin's suggestion that, "Joyce's detachment from his early,

uncritical, and predominantly *literary* Wagnerism began with his experience of the

Wagnerian spectacle on stage"[26]. Joyce, too, has scenery that moves sideways, *"a panel*

of fog rolls back rapidly, revealing rapidly in the jurybox the faces" (15.1139-40). He

also includes the description of the Venusberg from *Tannhäuser*:

> *Gazelles are leaping, feeding on the mountains. Near are lakes. Round*
>
> *their shores file shadows black of cedargroves. Aroma rises, a strong*
>
> *hairgrowth of resin. It burns, the orient, a sky of sapphire, cleft by the*
>
> *bronze flight of eagles. Under it likes the womancity, nude, white, still,*
>
> *cool, in luxury. A fountain murmurs among damask roses. Mammoth*
>
> *roses murmur of scarlet winegrapes. A wine of shame, lust, blood exudes,*
>
> *strangely murmuring.* (15.1324-30)

There are also allusions to music from *Die Wälkure* (15.3651-53) and Siegfried's sword

Nothung (15.4242).

Joyce not only alludes specifically to Wagner's operas, but also uses Wagner's

underlying "Wunder," or magic, on his own terms. Wagner used magic to concentrate

dramatic action and make it immediately accessible to the emotions, rather than relying

on the mediation of an intellect simultaneously affected by the interventions of time and

space. Wagner called this a "single-tense situation [which] may indeed seem unusual or

fantastic in isolation, but, its novelty and fantasy being self-contained, it is not seen by

the audience as 'magic,' but accepted as an understandable depiction of reality"[27].

Venusberg in *Tannhäuser*, the swan in *Lohengrin*, and the phantom ship in *Der Fliegende Holländer* are intended moments of "Wunder," and Joyce alludes to each: 15.1324-30 cited above; "*the swancomb of the gondola*," (15.7); "these flying Dutchmen or lying Dutchmen as they recline in their upholstered poop, casting dice, what reck they?" (15.1390-1).

But Joyce understands the limitations of his medium and must approach his audience through the textually mediated intellect, even when attempting to convey a visual image. For example, the "stage directions" describe the building of Bloomusalem:

> *Thirtytwo workmen, wearing rosettes, from all the counties of Ireland, under the guidance of Derwan the builder, construct the new Bloomusalem. It is a colossal edifice with crystal roof, built in the shape of a huge pork kidney, containing forty thousand rooms. In the course of its extension several buildings and monuments are demolished. Government offices are temporarily transferred to railway sheds. Numerous houses are razed to the ground. The inhabitants are lodged in barrels and boxes, all marked in red with the letters: L. B. Several paupers fall from a ladder. A part of the walls of Dublin, crowded with loyal sightseers, collapses.* (15.1546-5)

Similar to the description of Womancity, a.k.a. Venusberg, from above, this passage emphasizes time over emotion and applies Wagner's lofty dramatic aspirations to the practical effects of building in a real city. Out of the context of Wagner's mythic landscape, the concentration of action becomes absurd and hard to accept as reality.

The appearance of Stephen's mother (15.4157-62), however, may provide an example of a successful moment of "Wunder," if not for the reader, at least for the character. Not depicting the passage of time, but rather the intersection of past and present in a moment of Wagnerian redemption (ironically represented through allusion to Mozart's *Don Giovanni*), Stephen is quite affected. His emotional reaction is manifested as a Wagnerian allusion, with Stephen as Siegfried wielding his ashplant/Nothung to destroy the chandelier and escape from time and space, *"Time's livid final flame leaps and, in the following darkness, ruin of all space, shattered glass and toppling masonry"* (15.4245-6). "Wunder" helps transport Stephen in a moment of imagination to *Götterdämmerung*, or the Twilight of the Gods, when the world is destroyed so it can begin again. Immediately returned to its context of the brothel and the absurd commentary of The Gasjet, however, the passage reverses its effect and the scene is ultimately another parody. And as Virag cautions, "from the sublime to the ridiculous is but a step" (15.2401-2).

Joyce's "stage directions" are exacting and they capture the essence of Wagner's detailed performance notes and directions. Both of these qualities suggest the importance of the visual elements to the episode. The latter creates the scene, and the former invests it with the weight of Bayreuth. But the passages to which Joyce applies this technique also demonstrate elements of the extreme and absurd, suggesting a parody of Wagner rather than direct allusion. As with the musical references mentioned earlier, scholars have catalogued Wagnerian allusions in Joyce. And though they consider these allusions liberally, including references to opera titles, characters and themes, few have extended

the allusions to each artist's visual elements. I do not intend to exhaust the occurrences of visual similarities as captured in the "stage directions," but the previous examples begin to outline Wagnerian influence and Joyce's subsequently individualized device at work throughout "Circe."

There are a few possible interpretations of this device. As Joyce commented, classical methods and language were inadequate for his purposes. Needing a modernist dramatic model from which to design "Circe," it is possible he drew from his knowledge of Wagner. But to explain the parody and its critical slant on Wagnerian dramatic elements, Martin suggests a defensive stance for Joyce. The writer, envious of Wagner's success but disappointed by the composer's dramatic theory in execution, displays his disillusionment in ridicule. Another, kinder assessment may be that Joyce did not so much consider Wagner's flaws, but his own. Though narrative is inadequate to depict the subconscious, drama proves so as well. To return to the "stage directions," their inconsistencies of detail, placement and opinion come across as frustrated. The directions' "voice" sometimes privileges Bloom's costume changes with detailed descriptions of clothing articles and colors, and otherwise describes little or nothing overtly. More interesting than attributing such moments of description to moments of textual emphasis, it is as though the "voice" understands the failure of its descriptions to reproduce the visual scene from the text. Moments of silence suggest both frustration and deferral to the reader's imagination. Textual description, parodied or not, cannot contain the imagined vision.

These visual limitations gesture towards another contemporary dramatist's theory. Walter Benjamin's discussion of Bertolt Brecht's "epic theater" addresses the presentation of conditions rather than time and the audience's reaction as different from that of the reader[28]. The first point returns to the earlier discussion of the script form's disruption of time. Joyce perhaps used this form to unsettle the "natural" flow of time in order to present mental scenes without such constraining boundaries. Brecht's method further informs this premise by designing art to produce astonishment rather than empathy. While Wagnerian in appearance, since Brecht discourages audience identification with individual characters, astonishment is produced not by magic, but rather "at the circumstances under which [the characters] function"[29]. Thus, the "representation of conditions"[30] subsumes traditional plot action and arguably its temporal flow. I describe these "conditions" as similar to the mythic themes employed by Joyce and Wagner without the political responsibility.

But Benjamin also emphasizes the difference between the reader and the audience. Though each is affected by the same measured substance—"an actor must be able to space his gestures in the way a typesetter produces spaced type"[31]—the audience's reaction to the stage is more immediate and more emotive than the reader's textually, intellectually mediated experience. Citing the tradition of the French classical theater to make room on the stage for the seating of persons of rank, the boundary between the individual armchair and the collective stage conflate[32]. This also accounts for the distinction of Joyce's novel over Wagner's operas. Wagner designed his art around the collective experience, ignoring the interpretation of the individual in favor of

the group's emotions. *Ulysses*, however popular, would reach its audience one reader at a time. "Circe" derives its tension from the temporal and physical difference between the voyeuristic pleasure of staged drama and the intellectual rigor of the script. The show moves itself for the audience member separated from the stage by the frame of the proscenium, while the script challenges its reader to pause and attend every detail while creating the scene in the imagination from the frame of the book.

As I've discussed the reader's imagination in the textual realm above, it is important to note the equal inadequacy of the actual performance as well, at least as regards *Ulysses*. Production inevitably sacrifices elements to stage limitations, and *Ulysses in Nighttown*, Marjorie Barkentin's stage adaptation of "Circe" in 1958, is no exception. David Hayman, in pointing out the dramatic possibilities of both *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, calls the play a success. But Barkentin makes choices and cuts similar to those Wagner disagreed with a century earlier. Hayman states, "[Barkentin] omits much that is extraneous to the conflicts treated, but she does not distort Joyce's meaning or change the mood of the chapter, the most vivid and stageworthy in the entire book"[33]. But each choice involves the interpretation and evaluation of Joyce's elements singularly, both Barkentin's choice to omit items and Hayman's choice to praise her for it. I'm sure the resulting performance was interesting; I doubt it much resembled "Circe."

What is at stake in the translation of the script into the play is the moment of possibility, and it is that moment Joyce preserved for himself in "Circe." While apparently a script, it remains the largest episode in a novel, capitalizing on the impossibility of imagination teased out by the feigned reality of the form. But Stuart

Gilbert mentions that Joyce discussed making a movie of *Ulysses* in the late 1920s.

Donald Theall's research situates Joyce's work in the encroaching world of 20th century

technology, specifically suggesting that increased modes of communication and

representation affected the author's approach to language and the novel form. He states:

> Composing *Ulysses* around 1920, Joyce had to ask such questions as:
> What would the new role of the book in a culture that has discovered
> photography, phonography, radio, film, telegraph, cable, telephone, and
> electric light and has developed newspapers, magazines, advertising and
> sales promotion? Film, transforming description into presentation, will
> provide much of the panorama of novels; the stories of daily life will
> appear in greater detail and more up-to-date fashion in the press, on radio,
> and in film; oral poetry and speech will be reanimated by the potentialities
> of sound recording. In such a context there would be a strong tendency to
> shift in the direction of viewing the literary work as one of a number of
> possible communicating machines and to place a priority on act and
> gesture.[34]

The expanding media perhaps tempted Joyce. Regardless of his failing sight, the moment

of possibility preserved in "Circe" is a moment of technologic as well as imagined

potential. The particular development of film to translate description into presentation,

and perhaps make the initial translation into description unnecessary, could present

uncorrupted vision. This is not to ignore film's faults and the movement from mediation

by time or page to mediation by lens and screen, but rather to present the technology at

the moment of its freshest possibility. To describe the script of "Circe" as a blueprint is to apply Theall's title of "poetic engineer" and suggest that Joyce understood both the limitations of his medium and the new methods looming on the horizon.

As it stands, Joyce's "Circe" derives its power from the moment of possibility between the print medium and its manifestation through music, drama or film. Allusions to songs as well as theatrical performances recall the sensory experience with an artistic world. To pause and consider the influence of a thinker admired in childhood is to accept one's origins and consciously choose a future path. But to pause while reading also frees the mind to speculate about the future of imagination and representation. I do not offer an interpretation of the episode, but rather intend to emphasize the larger device at work, the visual platform on which all other allusions and plot occur. Simultaneously the experience of the reader and the audience member, "Circe" seduces the imagination as it wanders between description and silence, vision and sound, memory and fantasy, intellect and emotion.

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[1] Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995) 35-80.
[2] James Joyce, *Ulysses*, ed. Hans Walter Gabler (New York: Vintage Books, 1986). All textual and line references are from this edition.

[3] Matthew J. C. Hodgart and Ruth Bauerle, *Joyce's Grand Operoar: Opera in Finnegan's Wake* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

[4] Ruth Bauerle, ed., introduction, *Picking Up Airs: Hearing the Music in Joyce's Text* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993) 1.

[5] Bauerle 2.

[6] Zack Bowen, "Music as Comedy in *Ulysses*," *Picking Up Airs: Hearing the Music in Joyce's Text*, ed. Ruth Bauerle (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993) 32.

[7] Bowen 31.

[8] Bowen 33.

[9] Bowen 31.

[10] Bowen 42.

[11] Henriette Lazaridis Power, "Pantomime Songs and the Limits of Narrative in Ulysses," *Picking Up Airs: Hearing the Music in Joyce's Text*, ed. Ruth Bauerle (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993) 53. Power notes that Joyce misspells Turko in *Ulysses*, thus she spells the name Turko when referring to references in the novel, and Turco (the correct spelling) when referring to the pantomime, *Turco the Terrible*.

[12] Power 54.

[13] Power 54.

[14] Roger Kamien, *Music: an Appreciation* (New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 1996) 419.

[15] Timothy Martin, *Joyce and Wagner: A Study of Influence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 151.

[16] Martin 154.

[17] Martin 154.

[18] Geoffrey Skelton, *Wagner in Thought and Practice* (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1991) 5.

[19] Skelton 6.

[20] Martin 15.

[21] Martin 149.

[22] Martin 144.

[23] Reed Way Dasenbrock, "Mozart contra Wagner: the Operatic Roots of the Mythic Method," *James Joyce Quarterly* 27.3 (1990): 525.

[24] Martin 13.

[25] Martin 3.

[26] Martin 30.

[27] Skelton 23-4.

[28] Walter Benjamin, "What is Epic Theater?" *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969) 147-154.

[29] Benjamin 150.

[30] Benjamin 150.

[31] Benjamin 151.

[32] Benjamin 149.

[33] David Hayman, "Notes for the Staging of *Finnegans Wake*," *A James Joyce Miscellany*, ed. Marvin Magalaner (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1962) 279.

[34] David Theall, "Joyce's Techno-Poetics of Artifice: Machines, Media, Memory, and Modes of Communication in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*," *Joyce and Popular Culture*, ed. R. B. Kershner (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1996) 148.

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